

LOVE-LETTERS OF A  
VIOLINIST



ERIC MACKAY



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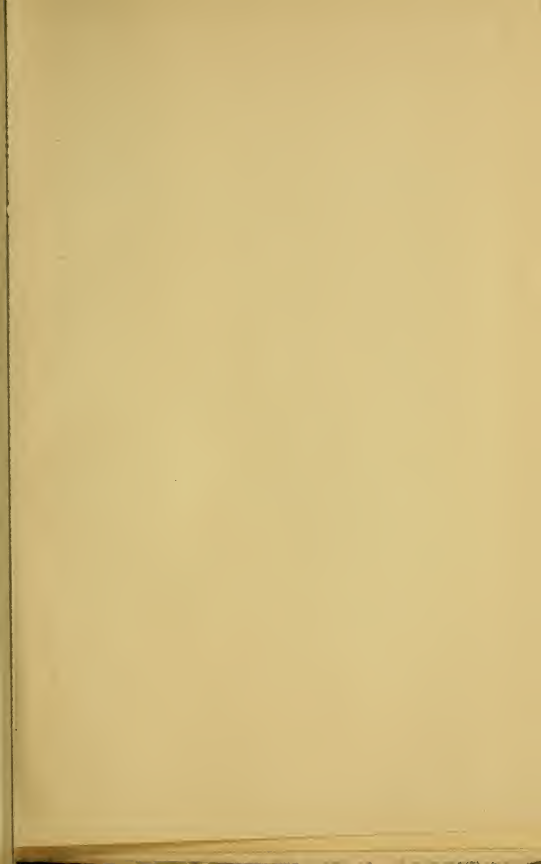
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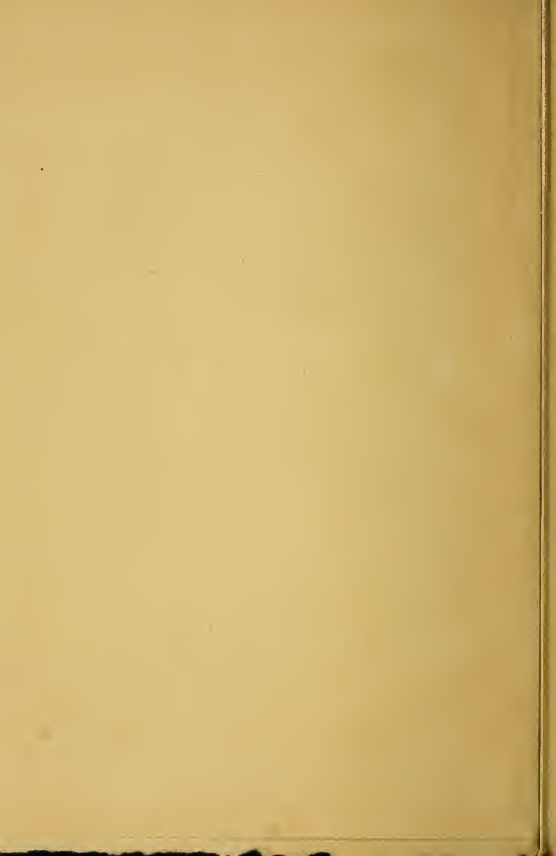
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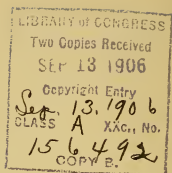


# LOVE-LETTERS *of a Violinist*



*Eric  
Mackay*

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**Love Letters of a Violinist**



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# Love Letters of a Violinist

## LETTER FIRST

### PRELUDE

TEACH me to love thee as a man, in  
prayer,

May love the picture of a sainted nun,  
And I will woo thee, when the day is  
done,

With tears and vows, and fealty past  
compare,

And seek the sunlight in thy golden hair,  
And kiss thy hand to claim thy ben-  
son.

I shall not need to gaze upon the skies,  
Or mark the message of the morning  
breeze,

## ❧ Love Letters

Or heed the notes of birds among the  
trees,  
If, taught by thee to yearn for Paradise,  
I may confront thee with adoring eyes  
And do thee homage on my bended  
knees.

For I would be thy pilgrim; I would  
bow  
Low as the grave, and, lingering in  
the same,  
Live like a sceptre; or be burnt in  
flame  
To do thee good. A kingdom for a vow  
I'd freely give to be elected now  
The chief of all the servants of thy  
fame.

Yea, like a Roman of the days of old,  
I would, for thee, construct a votive  
shrine,



of a Violinist ❀

And fan the fire, and consecrate the  
wine;

And have a statue there, of purest gold,  
And bow thereto, unlov'd and uncon-  
soled,

But proud withal to know the statue  
thine.

For it were sacrilege to stand erect,  
And face to face, within thy chamber  
lone,

To urge again my right to what hath  
flown:

A bygone trust, a passion coldly check'd!  
Were I a king of men, or laurel-deck'd,  
I were not fit to claim thee as mine  
own.

What am I then? The sexton of a joy,  
So lately slain, — so lately on its bier

## ✻ Love Letters

Laid out in state, — I dare not, for  
the fear  
Of this dead thing, regard it as a toy.  
It was a splendid Hope without alloy,  
And now, behold! I greet it with a  
tear.

It is my pastime, and my penance, too,  
My pride, my comfort, and my discontent,  
To count my sorrows ere the day is  
spent,  
And dream, at night, of love within the  
blue  
Of thy sweet eyes, and tremble through  
and through,  
And keep my house, as one that doth  
lament.

Have I not sinn'd? I have; and I am  
curst,

## of a Violinist ❀

And Misery makes the moments, as  
they fly,  
Harder than stone, and sorrier than a  
sigh.

Oh, I did wrong thee when I met thee  
first,  
And in my soul a fantasy was nurs'd  
That seem'd an outcome of the upper  
sky.

I thought a poor musician might aspire;  
I thought he might obtain from thee a  
look,  
As Dian's self will smile upon a  
brook,  
And make it glad, though deaf to its de-  
sire,  
And tinge its ripples with a tender fire,  
And make it thankful in its lonely  
nook.

## ❧ Love Letters

I thought to win thee ere the waning  
days

Had caught the snow, ere yet a word  
of mine

Had pall'd upon thee in the summer  
shine;

And I was fain to meet thee in the ways  
Of wild romance, and cling to thee, and  
gaze,

Between two kisses, on thy face  
divine.

Ay! on thy face, and on the rippling  
hair

That makes a mantle round thee in  
the night,

A royal robe, a network of the light,  
Which fairies brought for thee, to keep  
thee fair,

And hide the glories of a beauty rare

## of a Violinist ❀

As those of sylphs, whereof the poets  
write.

I thought, by token of thy matchless  
form,

To curb thy will, and make thee mine  
indeed,

From head to foot. There is no other  
creed

For men and maids, in safety or in storm,  
Than this of love. Repentance may be  
warm,

But love is best, though broken like a  
reed.

“She shall be mine till death!” I wildly  
said,

“Mine, and mine only.” And I  
vow’d, apace,

That I would have thee in my dwell-  
ing-place;

## ❧ Love Letters

Yea, like a despot, I would see thee led  
Straight to the altar, with a tear unshed,  
A wordless woe imprinted on thy face.

I wanted thee. I yearned for thee afar.  
"She shall be mine," I cried, "and  
mine alone.

A Gorgon grief may change me into  
stone

If I be balk'd." I hankered for a star,  
And soar'd, in thought, to where the  
angels are,  
To snatch my prize beyond the torrid  
zone.

I heeded not the teaching of the past.  
I heeded not the wisdom of the years.  
"She shall be mine," I urged, "till  
death appears,  
For death, I know, will conquer me at  
last."

## of a Violinist ❧

And then I found the sky was overcast ;  
And then I felt the bitterness of tears.

“ Behold ! ” I thought, “ Behold, how  
fair to see  
Is this white wonder ! ” And I wish’d  
thee well

But, like a demon out of darkest hell,  
I marr’d thy peace, and claim’d thee on  
the plea

Of pride and passion ; and there came to  
me

The far-off warning of a wedding-  
bell.

A friend of thine was walking to her  
doom,

A wife-elect, who, ere the summer sun  
Had plied its course, would weep for  
what was done, —

A friend of thine and mine, who, in the  
gloom  
Of her own soul, had built herself a  
tomb,  
To tremble there, when tears had  
ceas'd to run.

On this I brooded; but ah! not for this  
Did I abandon what I sought the  
while:  
The dear damnation of thy tender  
smile,  
And all the tortures that were like a  
bliss,  
And all the raptures of a holier kiss  
Than fair Miranda's on the magic  
isle.

I urged my suit. "My bond!" I did  
exclaim,



of a Violinist ❀

“ My pink and white, the hand I love  
to press,  
The golden hair that crowns her love-  
liness;  
And all the beauties which I cannot  
name;  
All, all are mine, and I will have the  
same,  
Though she should hate me for my  
love’s excess.”

I knew myself. I knew the withering fate  
That would consume me, if, amid my  
trust,  
I sued for Hope as beggars for a crust,  
“ O God!” I cried, entranced though  
desolate,  
“ Hallow my love, or turn it into hate.”  
And then I bow’d, in anguish, to the  
dust.

## LETTER SECOND

### SORROW

YES, I was mad. I know it. I was mad,  
For there is madness in the looks of  
love;  
And he who frights a tender, brooding  
dove  
Is not more base than I, and not so sad;  
For I had kill'd the hope that made me  
glad,  
And curs'd, in thought, the sunlight  
from above.

He was a fool, indeed, who lately tried  
To touch the moon, far-shining in the  
trees.  
He clomb the branches with his hands  
and knees,

## of a Violinist ❧

And craned his neck to kiss what he  
espied.

But down he fell, unseemly in his pride,  
And told his follies to the fitful breeze.

I was convicted of as strange a thing,  
And wild as strange; for, in a hope  
forlorn,

I fought with Fate. But now the flag  
is torn

Which, like a herald in the days of  
spring

I held aloft. The birds have ceased to  
sing

The dear old songs they sang from  
morn to morn.

All holy things avoid me. Breezes pass  
And will not fan my cheek, as once  
they did.

## ✻ Love Letters

The gloaming hies away like one for-  
bid ;  
And day returns, and shadows on the  
grass  
Fall from the trees ; and night and morn  
amass  
No joys for me this side the coffin-lid.

Absolve me, Sweet ! Absolve me, or I  
die ;  
And give me pardon, if no other  
boon.  
Ay, give me pardon, and the sun and  
moon,  
And all the stars that wander through  
the sky  
Will be thy sponsors, and the gladden'd  
cry  
Of one poor heart will thank thee for  
it soon.

## of a Violinist ❧

And mine Amati — my belovèd one —  
The tender sprite who soothes, as best  
he may,  
My fever'd pulse, and makes a roun-  
delay  
Of all my fears — e'en he, when all is  
done,  
Will be thy friend, and yield his place to  
none  
To wish thee well, and greet thee day  
by day.

For he is human, though, to look at  
him,  
To see his shape, to hear — as from  
the throat  
Of some bright angel — his ecstatic  
note,  
A sinful soul might dream of cherubim.

## ❧ Love Letters

Ay! and he watches when my senses  
swim,

And I can trace the thoughts that o'er  
him float.

Often, indeed, I tell him more than man  
E'er tells to woman in the honied  
hours

Of tranced night, in cities or in  
bowers;

And more, perchance, than lovers in the  
span

Of absent letters may, with scheming,  
plan

For life's surrender in the fairy  
towers.

And he consoles me. There is none I  
find,

None in the world, so venturesome  
and wild,

## of a Violinist ❀

And yet withal, so tender, true, and  
mild,  
As he can be. And those who think him  
blind  
Are much to blame. His ways are ever  
kind;  
And he can plead as softly as a child.  
And when he talks to me I feel the touch  
Of some sweet hope, a feeling of con-  
tent  
Almost akin to what by joy is meant.  
And then I brood on this; for Love is  
such,  
It makes us weep to want it overmuch,  
If wayward Fate withhold his full  
consent.  
Oh, come to me, thou friend of my de-  
sire,  
My lov'd Amati! At a word of thine

## ❧ Love Letters

I can be brave, and dash away the  
brine  
From off my cheek, and neutralize the  
fire  
That makes me mad, and use thee as a  
lyre  
To curb the anguish of this soul of  
mine.

Wood as thou art, my treasure, with the  
strings  
Fair on thy form, as fits thy parent-  
age,  
I cannot deem that in a gilded cage  
Thy spirit lives. The bird that in thee  
sings  
Is not a mortal. No! Enthralment  
flings  
Its charm about thee like a poet's rage.



of a Violinist ❧

Thou hast no sex; but, in an elfish way,  
Thou dost entwine in one, as in a  
troth,

The gleesome thoughts of man and  
maiden both.

The voice is fullest at the flush of day,  
But after midnight there is much to say  
In weird remembrance of an April oath.

And when the moon is seated on the  
throne  
Of some white cloud, with her attend-  
ants near —

The wondering stars that hold her  
name in fear —

Oh! then I know that mine Amati's  
tone

Is all for me, and that he stands alone,  
First of his tribe, belov'd without a  
peer.

❖ Love Letters

Yea, this is so, my Lady! A fair form  
Made of the garner'd relics of a tree,  
In which of old a dryad of the lea  
Did live and die. He flourish'd in a  
storm,  
And learnt to warble when the days  
were warm  
And learnt at night the secrets of the  
sea.

And now he is all mine, for my caress  
And my strong bow, — an Ariel, as  
it seems, —  
A something sweeter than the sweet-  
est dreams;  
A prison'd wizard that has come to bless  
And will not curse, though tortured,  
more or less,  
By some remembrance that athwart  
him streams.

of a Violinist ❧

It is the thought of April. 'Tis the  
tie

That made us one; for then the earth  
was fair

With all things on 't, and summer in  
the air

Tingled for thee and me. A soft  
reply

Came to thy lips, and I was like to die

To hear thee make such coy confes-  
sions there.

It was the dawn of love or (so I  
thought)

The tender cooing of thy bosom-  
bird —

The beating heart that flutter'd at a  
word,

And seem'd for me alone to be so fraught

## ❧ Love Letters

With wants unutter'd! All my being  
caught

Glamour thereat, as at a boon con-  
ferr'd.

And I was lifted, in a minute's space  
As nigh to Heaven as Heaven is nigh  
to thee,

And in thy wistful glances I could  
see

Something that seem'd a joy, and in thy  
face

A splendour fit for angels in the place  
Where God has named them all in  
their degree.

Ah, none so blest as I, and none so  
proud,

In that wild moment when a thrill  
was sent

of a Violinist ❧

Right through my soul, as if from  
thee it went

As flame from fire ! But this was disal-  
low'd ;

And I shall sooner wear a winter  
shroud

Than thou revoke my doom of banish-  
ment.

## LETTER THIRD

### REGRETS

WHEN I did wake, to-day, a bird of  
Heaven,

A wanton, woeless thing, a wandering  
sprite,

Did seem to sing a song for my  
delight;

And, far away, did make its holy steven  
Sweeter to hear than lute-strings that are  
seven;

And I did weep thereat in my despite.

O glorious sun! I thought, O gracious  
king

Of all this splendour that we call the  
earth!

of a Violinist ❧

For thee the lark distils his morning  
worth,  
But who will hear the matins that I  
sing?  
Who will be glad to greet me in the  
spring,  
Or heed the voice of one so little  
worth?

Who will accept the thanks I would  
entone  
For having met thee? and for having  
seen  
Thy face an instant in the bower  
serene  
Of perfect faith? The splendour was  
thine own,  
The rapture mine; and Doubt was over-  
thrown,

## ❧ Love Letters

And Grief forgot the key-note of its  
threne.

I rose in haste. I seiz'd, as in a trance,  
My violin, the friend I love the best  
(After thyself, sweet soul!) and  
wildly press'd,  
And firmly drew it, with a master's  
glance,  
Straight to my heart! The sunbeams  
seem'd to dance  
Athwart the strings, to rob me of my  
rest.

For then a living thing it did appear,  
And every chord had sympathies for  
me;  
And something like a lover's lowly  
plea  
Did shake its frame, and something like  
a tear



## of a Violinist ❀

Fell on my cheek, to mind me of the  
year

When first we met, we two, beside  
the sea.

I stood erect, I proudly lifted up

The Sword of Song, the bow that  
trembled now,

As if for joy, my grief to disallow. —

Are there not some who, in the choicest  
cup,

Imbibe despair, and famish as they sup,  
Sear'd by a solace that was like a  
vow?

Are there not some who weep, and can-  
not tell

Why it is thus? And others who  
repeat

Stories of ice, to cool them in the  
heat?

## ✻ Love Letters

And some who quake for doubts they  
cannot quell,  
And yet are brave? And some who  
smile in Hell  
For thinking of the sin that was so  
sweet?

I have been one who, in the glow of  
youth,  
Have liv'd in books, and realized a  
bliss  
Unfelt by misers, when they count  
and kiss  
Their minted joys; and I have known,  
in sooth,  
The taste of water from the well of  
Truth,  
And found it good. But time has  
alter'd this.

of a Violinist ❧

I have been hated, scorn'd, and thrust  
away,  
By one who is the Regent of the  
flowers,  
By one who, in the magic of her  
powers,  
Changes the day to night, the night to  
day,  
And makes a potion of the solar ray  
Which drugs my heart, and deadens  
it for hours.

I have been taught that Happiness is  
coy,  
And will not come to all who bend  
the knee;  
That Faith is like the foam upon the  
sea,  
And Pride a snare, and Pomp a foolish  
toy,

✻ Love Letters

And Hope a moth, whose wings we may  
destroy;

And she I love has taught these  
things to me.

Yes, thou, my Lady! Thou hast made  
me feel

The pangs of that Prometheus who  
was chain'd

And would not bow, but evermore  
maintain'd

A fierce revolt. Have I refused to  
kneel?

I do it gladly. But to mine appeal

No answer comes, and none will be  
ordain'd.

Why, then, this rancour? Why so cold  
a thing

As thy displeasure, O thou dearest  
One?

of a Violinist ❧

I meant no wrong. I stole not from  
the sun  
The fire of Heaven; but I did seek to  
bring  
Glory from thee to me; and in the  
Spring  
I pray'd the prayer that left me thus  
undone.

I pray'd my prayer. I wove into my  
song  
Fervour, and joy, and mystery, and the  
bleak,  
The wan despair that words can never  
speak.  
I pray'd as if my spirit did belong  
To some old master, who was wise and  
strong  
Because he lov'd, and suffer'd, and  
was weak.

## ❧ Love Letters

I curb'd the notes, convulsive, to a sigh,  
And, when they falter'd most, I made  
them leap

Fierce from my bow, as from a summer sleep

A young she-devil. I was fired thereby  
To bolder efforts, and a muffled cry

Came from the strings, as if a saint  
did weep.

I changed the theme. I dallied with  
the bow

Just time enough to fit it to a mesh  
Of merry notes, and drew it back  
afresh

To talk of truth and constancy and woe,  
And life, and love, and madness, and  
the glow

Of mine own soul which burns into  
my flesh.

## of a Violinist ❀

It was the Lord of music, it was he  
Who seiz'd my hand. He forced me,  
as I play'd,  
To think of that ill-fated fairy-glade  
Where once we stroll'd at night; and  
wild and free  
My notes did ring; and quickly unto  
me  
There came the joy that maketh us  
afraid.

Oh! I shall die of tasting in my dreams  
Poison of love and ecstasy of pain;  
For I shall never kneel to thee again,  
Or sit in bowers, or wander by the  
streams  
Of golden vales, or of the morning  
beams  
Construct a wreath to crown thee on  
the plain!

✻ Love Letters

Yet it were easy, too, to compass this,  
So thou wert kind; and easy to my  
soul  
Were harder things if I could reach  
the goal  
Of all I crave, and consummate a bliss  
In mine own fashion, and compel a kiss  
More fraught with honour than a  
king's control.

It is not much to say that I would  
die, —  
It is not much to say that I would  
dare  
Torture, and doom, and death, could  
I but share  
One kiss with thee. For then, without a  
sigh,  
I'd teach thee pity, and be graced  
thereby,



of a Violinist ❧

Wet with thy tears, and shrouded by  
thy hair.

It is not much to say that this is so ;

Yet I would sell my substance and my  
breath,

And all the joy that comes from  
Nazareth,

And all the peace that all the angels  
know,

To lie with thee, one minute, in the  
snow

Of thy white bosom, ere I sank in  
death!

## LETTER FOURTH

### YEARNINGS

THE earth is glad, I know, when night  
is spent,

For then she wakes the birdlings in  
the bowers;

And, one by one, the rosy-footed  
hours

Start for the race; and from crimson  
tent

The soldier-sun looks o'er the firament;  
And all his path is strewn with festal  
flowers.

But what his mission? What the happy  
quest

Of all this toil? He journeys on his  
way

## of a Violinist ❧

As Cæsar did, unbiass'd by the sway  
Of maid or man. His goal is in the  
west.

Will he unbuckle there, and, in his rest,  
Dream of the gods who died in Nero's  
day?

Will he arraign the traitor in his camp?  
The Winter Comet who, with  
streaming hair,  
Attack'd the sweetest of the Pleiads  
fair

And ravish'd her, and left her in the  
damp

Of dull decay, nor re-illumed the lamp  
That show'd the place she occupied  
in air.

No; 'tis not so! He seeks his lady-  
moon,

## ❧ Love Letters

The gentle orb for whom Endymion  
sigh'd,  
And trusts to find her by the ocean  
tide,  
Or near a forest in the coming June;  
For he has lov'd her since she late did  
swoon  
In that eclipse of which she nearly  
died.

He knew her then; he knew her in the  
glow  
Of all her charms. He knew that she  
was chaste,  
And that she wore a girdle at her  
waist  
Whiter than pearl. And when he eyed  
her so  
He knew that in the final overthrow

of a Violinist ❧

He should prevail, and she should be  
embraced.

But were I minded thus, were I the  
sun,

And thou the moon, I would not  
bide so long

To hear the marvels of thy wedding-  
song;

For I would have the planets, every one,  
Conduct thee home, before the day was  
done,

And call thee queen, and crown thee  
in the throng.

And, like Apollo, I would flash on thee,  
And rend thy veil, and call thee by  
the name

That Daphne lov'd, the loadstar of  
his fame;

## ❧ Love Letters

And make myself for thee as white to  
see

As whitest marble, and as wildly free  
As Leda's lover with his look of flame.

And there should then be fêtes that  
should not cease

Till I had kiss'd thee, lov'd one! in  
a trance

Lasting a lifetime, through a life's  
romance;

And every star should have a mate  
apiece,

And I would teach them how, in ancient  
Greece,

The gods were masters of the maidens'  
dance.

I should be bold to act; and thou  
should'st feel

of a Violinist ❧

Terror and joy combined, in all the  
span

Of thy sweet body, ere my fingers ran  
From curl to curl, to prompt thee how  
to kneel;

And then, soul-stricken by thy mute  
appeal,

I should be quick to answer like a  
man.

What! have I sinn'd, dear Lady? have  
I sinn'd

To talk so wildly? Have I sinn'd  
in this?

An angel's mouth was surely meant  
to kiss!

Or have I dreamt of courtship out in  
Inde

In some wild wood? My soul is fever-  
thinn'd,

## ❧ Love Letters

And fierce and faint, and frauded of  
its bliss.

I will not weep. I will not in the night  
Weep or lament, or, bending on my  
knees,  
Appeal for pity! In the clustered  
trees

The wind is boasting of its one delight;  
And I will boast of mine, in thy despite,  
And say I love thee more than all of  
these.

The rose in bloom, the linnet as it sings,  
The fox, the fawn, the cygnet on the  
mere,  
The dragon-fly that glitters like a  
spear, —  
All these, and more, all these ecstatic  
things,



## of a Violinist ❧

Possess their mates; and some arrive on  
wings,

And some on webs, to make their  
meanings clear.

Yea, all these things, and more than I  
can tell,

More than the most we know of, one  
and all,

Do talk of Love. There is no other  
call

From wind to wave, from rose to aspho-  
del,

Than Love's alone — the things we can-  
not quell,

Do what we will, from font to  
funeral.

What have I done, I only on the earth,  
That I should wait a century for a  
word?

❧ Love Letters

A hundred years, I know, have been  
deferr'd  
Since last we met, and then it was in  
dearth  
Of gladsome peace; for, in a moment's  
girth,  
My shuddering soul was wounded  
like a bird.

I knew thy voice. I knew the veering  
sound  
Of that sweet oracle which once did  
tend  
To treat me grandly, as we treat a  
friend;  
And I would know 't if darkly under-  
ground  
I lay as dead, or, down among the  
drown'd,  
I blindly stared, unvalued to the end.

of a Violinist ❧

There! take again the kiss I took from  
thee

Last night in sleep. I met thee in a  
dream

And drew thee closer than a monk  
may deem

Good for the soul. I know not how it  
be,

But this I know: if God be good to me  
I shall be raised again to thine es-  
teem.

I touched thy neck. I kiss'd it. I was  
bold.

And bold am I to-day, to call to  
mind

How, in the night, a murmur not un-  
kind,

Broke on mine ear; a something new  
and old

## ✽ Love Letters

Quick in thy breath, as when a tale is  
told

Of some great hope with madness in-  
tertwined.

And round my lips, in joy and yet in  
fear,

There seemed to dart the stings of  
kisses warm.

These were my honey-bees, and soon  
would swarm

To choose their queen. But ere they  
did appear,

I heard again that murmur in mine ear  
Which seem'd to speak of calm before  
a storm.

“What is it, love?” I whispered in  
my sleep,

And turned to thee, as April unto  
May.

of a Violinist ❧

“Art mine in truth, mine own, by  
night and day,  
Now and for ever?” And I heard thee  
weep,  
And then persuade; and then my soul  
did leap  
Swiftly to thine, in love’s ecstatic  
sway.

I fondled thee! I drew thee to my  
heart,  
Well knowing in the dark that joy  
is dumb.  
And then a cry, a sigh, a sob, did  
come  
Forth from thy lips. . . . I waken’d,  
with a start,  
To find thee gone. The day had taken  
part  
Against the total of my blisses’ sum.

## LETTER FIFTH

### CONFESSIONS

O LADY mine! O Lady of my Life!

Mine and not mine, a being of the  
sky

Turn'd into Woman, and I know not  
why —

Is't well, bethink thee, to maintain a  
strife

With thy poor servant? War unto the  
knife,

Because I greet thee with a lover's  
eye?

Is't well to visit me with thy disdain,  
And rack my soul, because, for love  
of thee,

I was too prone to sink upon my knee,

of a Violinist ❀

And too intent to make my meaning  
plain,

And too resolved to make my loss a gain  
To do thee good, by Love's immortal  
plea?

O friend! forgive me for my dream of  
bliss.

Forgive: forget; be just! Wilt not  
forgive?

Not though my tears should fall, as  
through a sieve

The salt sea-sand? What joy hast thou  
in this:

To be a maid, and marvel at a kiss?

Say! Must I die, to prove that I can  
live?

Shall this be so? E'en this? And all  
my love

## ❖ Love Letters

Wreck'd in an instant? No, a gentle  
heart  
Beats in thy bosom; and the shades  
depart  
From all fair gardens, and from skies  
above,  
When thou art near. For thou art like  
a dove,  
And dainty thoughts are with thee  
where thou art.

Oh! it is like the death of dearest kin,  
To wake and find the fancies of the  
brain  
Sear'd and confused. We languish  
in the strain  
Of some lost music, and we find within,  
Deep in the heart, a record of a sin,  
The thrill thereof, and all the bliss-  
ful pain.



## of a Violinist ❀

For it is deadly sin to love too well,  
And unappeased, unhonour'd, unbe-  
sought,  
To feed on dreams; and yet 'tis aptly  
thought  
That all must love. E'en those who  
most rebel  
In Eros' camp have known his master-  
spell;  
And more shall learn than Eros yet  
has taught.

But I am mad to love. I am not wise.  
I am the worst of men to love the  
best  
Of all sweet women! An untimely  
jest,  
A thing made up of rhapsodies and  
sighs,

## ❖ Love Letters

And unordained on earth, and in the  
    skies,  
And undesired in tumult and in rest.

All this is true. I know it. I am he.  
I am that man. I am the hated  
    friend

Who once received a smile, and  
    sought to mend  
His soul with hope. O tyrant! by the  
    plea  
Of all thy grace, do thou accept from me  
At least the notes that know not to  
    offend.

See! I will strike again the major chord  
Of that great song, which in his early  
    days,  
Beethoven wrote; and thine shall be  
    the praise,

of a Violinist ❧

And thine the frenzy like a soldier's  
sword

Flashing therein; and thine, O thou  
adored

And bright true Lady! all the poet's  
lays.

To thee, to thee, the songs of all my joy,  
To thee the songs that wildly seem to  
bless,

And those that mind thee of a past  
caress.

Lo! with a whisper to the Wingèd Boy  
Who rules my fate, I will my strength  
employ

To make a matin-song of my distress.

But playing thus, and toying with the  
notes,

I half forget the cause I have to  
weep;

## ✻ Love Letters

And, like a reaper in the realms of  
sleep,  
I hear the bird of morning where he  
floats  
High in the welkin and in fairy boats  
I see the minstrels sail upon the  
deep.

In mid-suspension of my leaping bow  
I almost hear the silence of the night;  
And, in my soul, I know the stars  
are bright  
Because they love, and that they  
nightly glow  
To make it clear that there is nought  
below,  
And nought above, so fair as Love's  
delight.

But shall I touch thy heart by speech  
alone,

of a Violinist ❧

Without Amati? Shall I prove, by  
words,

That hope is meant for men as well  
as birds;

That I would take a scorpion, or a  
stone,

In lieu of gold, and sacrifice a throne  
To be the keeper of thy flocks and  
herds?

Ah no, my Lady! though I sang to  
thee

With fuller voice than sings the  
nightingale —

Fuller and softer in the moonlight  
pale

Than lays of Keats, or Shelley, or the  
free

And fire-lipp'd Byron — there would  
come to me

## ✻ Love Letters

No word of thine to thank me for  
the tale.

Thou would'st not heed. Thou would'st  
not any-when,  
In bower or grove — or in the holy  
nook  
Which shields thy bed — thou  
would'st not care to look  
For thoughts of mine, though faithful  
in their ken  
As are the minds of England's fighting  
men  
When they inscribe their names in  
Honour's book.

Thou would'st not care to scan my face,  
and through  
This face of mine, the soul, for scraps  
of thought.

## of a Violinist ❧

Yet 'tis a face that somewhere has been  
taught  
To smile in tears. Mine eyes are some-  
what blue  
And quick to flash (if what I hear be  
true)  
And dark, at times, as velvet newly  
wrought.

But wilt thou own it? Wilt thou in  
the scroll  
Of my sad life, perceive, as in a hive,  
A thousand happy fancies that con-  
trive  
To seek thee out? Thy bosom is the  
goal  
Of all my thoughts, and quick to thy  
control  
They wend their way, elate to be  
alive.

But there is something I could never  
bring  
My soul to compass. No! could I  
compel  
Thy plighted troth, I would not have  
thee tell  
A lie to God. I'll have no wedding-  
ring  
With loveless hands around my neck to  
cling;  
For this were worse than all the fires  
of hell.

I would not take thee from a lover's  
lips,  
Or from the rostrum of a roaring  
crowd,  
Or from the memory of a husband's  
shroud,  
Or from the goblet where a Cæsar sips.



## of a Violinist ❧

I would not touch thee with my finger-  
tips,

But I would die to serve thee, — and  
be proud.

And could I enter Heaven, and find  
therein,

In all the wide dominions of the air,  
No trace of thee among the natives  
there,

I would not bide with them — No! not  
to win

A seraph's lyre — but I would sin a sin,  
And free my soul, and seek thee  
otherwhere!

LETTER SIXTH

DESPAIR

I AM undone. My hopes have beggar'd  
me,

For I have lov'd where loving was  
denied.

To-day is dark, and Yesterday has  
died,

And when To-morrow comes, erect and  
free,

Like some great king, whose tyrant will  
he be,

And whose defender in the days of  
pride ?

I am not cold, and yet November bands  
Compress my heart. I know the  
month is May,

of a Violinist ❀

And that the sun will warm me if I  
stay.

But who is this ? Oh, who is this that  
stands

Straight in my path, and with his bony  
hands

Appeals to me to turn some other  
way?

It is the phantom of my murder'd joy,  
Which once again has come to perse-  
cute,

And tell me the tales which late I did  
refute.

But lo! I now must heed them, as a  
boy

Takes up, in tears, the remnants of a toy,  
Or bard forlorn the fragments of a  
lute.

It is the ghost that, day by day, did come  
To tempt my spirit to the mountain-  
peak;

It is the thing that wept, and would  
not speak,  
And, with a sign, to show that it was  
dumb,  
Did seem to hint at Death that was the  
sum  
Of all we know, and all we strive to  
seek.

And now it comes again, and with its eye  
Bloodshot and blear, though pallid in  
its face,

Doth point, exacting, to the very place  
Where I do keep, that no one may descry,  
A lady's glove, a ribbon, and a dry,  
A perjur'd rose, which oft I did em-  
brace.

## of a Violinist ❧

It means, perchance, that I must make  
an end

Of all these things, and burn them as  
a fee

To my Despair, when down upon my  
knee.

O piteous thing! have pity; be my  
friend;

Or say, at least, that blessings will  
descend

On her I love, on her if not on me!

The Shape did smile; and, wildly, with  
a start,

Did shrivel up, as when a fire is spent,  
Whereof the smoke obscured the firm-  
ament.

And then I knew it had but tried my  
heart,

To teach me how to play a manly part,

## ✻ Love Letters

And strengthen me in all my good intent.

And here I stand alone, e'en like a leaf  
In sudden frost, as quiet as the wing  
Of wounded bird, which knows it cannot sing.

A child may moan, but not a mountain chief.

If we be sad, if we possess a grief,  
The grief should be the slave, and not the king.

Yes, I will pause, and pluck from out the Past

The full discernment of my sorry cheer,

And why the sunlight seems no longer clear,

And why, in spite of anguish, and the vast,

## of a Violinist ❀

The sickly blank that o'er my life is cast,  
I cannot kneel to-day, or shed a tear.

It was thy friendship. It was this I  
had,

This and no more. I was a fool to  
doubt,

I was a fool to strive to put to rout  
My many foes: — thy musings tender-  
glad,

Which all had said: — “ Avoid him! he  
is mad —

Mad with his love, and Love's erratic  
shout.”

I should have known, — I should have  
guess'd in time, —

That, like a soft mirage at twilight  
hour,

My dream would melt, and rob me of  
its dower.

## ✻ Love Letters

I should have guess'd that all the heights  
    sublime,  
Which look'd like spires and cities built  
    in rhyme,  
    Would droop and die, like petals from  
    a flower.

I should have known, indeed, that to the  
    brave  
    All things are servants. But my lost  
    Delight  
    Was like the ship that founders in a  
    night,  
And leaves no mark. How then? Is  
    Passion's grave  
All that is left beside the sobbing wave?  
    The foam thereof, the saltness, and  
    the blight?

I had a fleet of ships, and where are  
    they?



of a Violinist ❧

Where are they all? and where the  
merchandise  
I treasured once — an empire's golden  
prize,  
The empire of a soul, which, in a day,  
Lost all its wealth? I was deceiv'd, I  
say,  
For I had reckon'd on propitious skies.

I look'd afar, and saw no sign of wrack.  
I look'd anear, and felt the summer  
breeze  
Warm on my cheek; and forth upon  
the seas  
I sent my ships; and would not have  
them back,  
Though some averr'd a storm was on the  
track  
Of all I lov'd, and all I own'd of  
these.

## ❖ Love Letters

One ship was "Joy," the second  
"Truth," the third  
"Love in a Dream," and, last not  
least of all,  
"Hope," and "Content," and "Pride  
that hath a Fall."  
And they were goodly vessels, by my  
word,  
With sails as strong as pinions of a bird,  
And crew that answer'd well to  
Duty's call.

In one of these — in "Hope" — where  
I did fly  
A lofty banner, — in this ship I  
found  
Doom's-day at last, and all my crew  
were drown'd.  
Yes, I was wreck'd in this, and here I  
lie,

of a Violinist ❀

Here on the beach, forlorn and like to  
die,  
With none to pray for me on holy  
ground.

O sweet my Lady! If thou pass this  
way,  
And thou behold me where I lie beset  
By wind and wave, and powerless to  
forget,  
Wilt not approach me thoughtfully and  
say: —  
“This man was true. He lov’d me  
night and day  
And though I spurn’d at him, he loves  
me yet.”

Wilt not withhold thy blame, at least  
to-night,  
And shed for me a tear, as one may  
grieve

## ❧ Love Letters

For people known in books, for men  
    who weave  
Ropes out of sand, to lead them to the  
    light?  
Oh! treat me thus, and, by thy hand so  
    white,  
I will forego the dreams to which I  
    cleave.

Be just to me, and say, when all is o'er,  
    When some such book is calmly laid  
    aside:  
    “The shadow-men have liv'd and  
    lov'd and died;  
The shadow-women will be vexed no  
    more.  
But there is One for whom my heart is  
    sore,  
Because he took a shadow for his  
    guide.”

of a Violinist ❀

Say only this; but pray for me withal,  
And let a pitying thought possess thee  
then,

Whether at home, at sea, or in a glen  
In some wild nook. It were a joy to fall  
Dead at thy feet, as at a trumpet's call,  
For I should then be peerless among  
men!

LETTER SEVENTH

HOPE

O TEARS of mine! Ye start I know not  
why,  
Unless, indeed, to prove that I am  
glad,  
Albeit fast wedded to a thought so  
sad  
I scarce can deem that my despair will  
die,  
Or that the sun, careering up the sky,  
Will warm again a world that seem'd  
so mad.

And yet, who knows ? The world is, to  
the mind,  
Much as we make it; and the things  
we tend

## of a Violinist ❧

Wear, for the nonce, the liveries that  
we lend.

And some such things are fair, though  
ill-defined,

And some are scathing, like the wintry  
wind ;

And some begin, and some will never  
end.

How can I think, ye tears! that I have  
been

The thing I was — so doubting, so  
unfit,

And so unblest, with brows for ever  
knit,

And hair unkempt, and face becoming  
lean

And cold and pale, as if I late had seen  
Medusa's head, and all the scowls of  
it ?

## ❧ Love Letters

Oh, why is this ? Oh, why have I so  
long  
Brooded on grief, and made myself a  
bane  
To golden fields and all the happy  
plain  
Where once I met the Lady of my  
Song,  
The lady for whose sake I shall be  
strong,  
But never weak or diffident again ?

I was too shorn of hope. I did em-  
ploy  
Words like a mourner ; and to Her I  
bow'd,  
As one might kneel to Glory in its  
shroud.  
But I am crown'd to-day, and not so  
coy —



of a Violinist ❧

Crown'd with a kiss, and sceptred with a  
joy;  
And all the world shall see that I am  
proud.

I shall be sated now. I shall receive  
More than the guerdon of my wildest  
thought,  
More than the most that ecstasy has  
taught  
To saints in Heaven; and more than  
poets weave  
In madcap verse, to warn us, or deceive;  
And more than Adam knew ere Eve  
was brought.

I know the meaning now of all the signs,  
And all the joys I dreamt of in my  
dreams.  
I realize the comfort of the streams

## ❖ Love Letters

When they reflect the shadows of the  
pines.

I know that there is hope for celan-  
dines,

And that a tree is merrier than it  
seems.

I know the mighty hills have much  
to tell;

And that they quake, at times, in  
undertone,

And talk to stars, because so much  
alone

And so unlov'd. I know that, in the  
dell,

Flowers are betroth'd, and that a wed-  
ding-bell

Rings in the breeze on which a moth  
has flown.

of a Violinist ❧

I know such things, because to loving  
    hearts  
Nature is keen, and pleasures, long de-  
    lay'd,  
Quicken the pulse, and turn a truant  
    shade  
Into a sprite, equipp'd with all the darts  
That once were Cupid's; and the day de-  
    parts,  
And sun and moon conjoin, as man  
    with maid.

The lover knows how grand a thing is  
    love,  
How grand, how sweet a thing, and  
    how divine  
More than the pouring out of choicest  
    wine;  
More than the whiteness of the whitest  
    dove;

## ❧ Love Letters

More than the glittering of the stars  
above;  
And such a love, O Love! is thine and  
mine.

To me the world, to-day, has grown so  
fair  
I dare not trust myself to think of it.  
Visions of light around me seem to flit,  
And Phœbus loosens all his golden hair  
Right down the sky; and daisies turn and  
stare  
At things we see not with our human  
wit.

And here, beside me, there are mosses  
green  
In shelter'd nooks, and gnats in bright  
array,  
And lordly beetles out for holiday;

of a Violinist ❧

And spiders small that work in silver  
sheen

To make a kirtle for the Fairy Queen,  
That she may don it on the First of  
May.

I hear, in thought, I hear the very  
words

That Arethusa, turn'd into a brook,  
Spoke to Diana, when her leave she  
took

Of all she lov'd — low-weeping as the  
birds

Shrill'd out of tune, and all the  
frightened herds

Scamper'd to death, in spite of pipe  
and crook.

I know, to-day, why winds are made to  
sigh

## ❧ Love Letters

And why they hide themselves, and  
why they gloat  
In some old ruin! Mote confers with  
mote,  
And shell with shell; and corals live and  
die,  
And die and live, below the deep. And  
why?  
To make a necklace for my lady's  
throat.

And yet the world, in all its varied  
girth,  
Lacks what we look for. There is  
something base  
In mere existence — something in the  
face  
Of men and women which accepts the  
earth,  
And all its havings, as its right of birth,

of a Violinist ❧

But not its quittance, not its resting-  
place.

There have been moments, at the set of  
sun,

When I have long'd for wings upon  
the wind,

That I might seek a planet to my  
mind,

More full-develop'd than this present  
one;

With more of scope, when all is said and  
done,

To satisfy the wants of human kind.

A world with thee, a home in some  
remote

And unknown region, which no sage's  
ken

Has compass'd yet; of which no  
human pen

Has traced the limits; where no terrors  
float  
In wind or wave, and where the soul  
may note  
A thousand raptures unreveal'd to  
men.

To be transported in a magic car,  
On some transcendent night in early  
June,  
Beyond the horn'd projections of the  
moon;  
To have our being in a bridal star,  
In lands of light, where only angels are,  
Athwart the spaces where the comets  
swoon.

To be all this: to have in our estate  
Worlds without stint, and quit them  
for the clay



of a Violinist ❧

Of some new planets where a summer's day

Lasts fifty years; and there to celebrate  
Our Golden Wedding, by the will of  
Fate —

This were a subject for a seraph's lay.

This were a life to live, — a life indeed, —

A thing to die for; if, in truth, we die  
When we but put our mortal vestments by.

This were a climax for a lover's need  
Sweeter than songs, and holier than the  
creed

Of half the zealots who have sought  
the sky.

## LETTER EIGHTH

### A VISION

YES, I will tell thee what, a week ago,  
I dreamt of thee, and all the joy  
therein

Which I conceiv'd, and all the holy  
din  
Of throbbing music, which appear'd to  
flow

From room to room, as if to make me  
know

The power thereof to lead me out of  
sin.

Methought I saw thee in a ray of light,  
This side a grove — a dream within  
a dream —

of a Violinist ❀

With eyes of tender pleading, and the  
gleam  
Of far-off summers in thy tresses bright;  
And I did tremble at the gracious sight,  
As one who sees a naiad in a stream.

I follow'd thee. I knew that, in the  
wood,  
Where thus we met, there was a tryst-  
ing-place.

I follow'd thee, as mortals in a chase  
Follow the deer. I knew that it was  
good  
To track thy step, and promptly under-  
stood  
The fitful blush that flutter'd to thy  
face.

I followed thee to where a brook did  
run

❖ Love Letters

Close to a grot; and there I knelt to  
thee.

And then a score of birds flew over  
me, —

Birds which arrived because the day was  
done,

To sing the Sanctus of the setting sun;

And then I heard thy voice upon the  
lea.

“ Follow! ” it cried. I rose and follow’d  
fast;

And, in my dream, I felt the dream  
was true,

And that, full soon, Titania, with her  
crew

Of imps and fays, would meet me on the  
blast.

But this was hindered; and I quickly  
passed

of a Violinist ❀

Into the valley where the cedars  
grew.

And what a scene, O God! and what  
repose,

And what sad splendour in the burn-  
ing west:

A languid sun low-dropping to his  
rest,

And incense rising, as of old it rose,

To do him honour at the daylight's  
close, —

The birds entranced, and all the winds  
repress'd.

I followed thee. I came to where a  
shrine

Stood in the trees, and where an oaken  
gate

Swung in the air, so turbulent of late.

## ✻ Love Letters

I touch'd thy hand; it quiver'd into  
mine;

And then I look'd into thy face benign,  
And saw the smile for which the  
angels wait.

And lo! the moon had sailed into the  
main

Of that blue sky, as if therein did  
poise

A silver boat; and then a tuneful  
noise

Broke from the copse where late a breeze  
was slain;

And nightingales, in ecstasy of pain,  
Did break their hearts with singing  
the old joys.

“Is this the spot?” I cried, “is this the  
spot

## of a Violinist ❀

Where I must tell thee all my heart's  
desire?

Is this the time when I must drink the  
fire,

And eat the snow, and find it fever-hot?  
I freeze with heat, and yet I fear it  
not;

And all my pulses thrill me like a  
lyre."

A wondrous light was thrown upon thy  
face;

It was the light within; it was the  
ray

Of thine own soul. And then a voice  
did say,

"Glory to God the King, and Jesu's  
grace

Here and hereafter!" And about the  
place

## ❖ Love Letters

A radiance shone surpassing that of  
day.

It was thy voice. It was the voice I  
prize

More than the sound of April in the  
dales,

More than the songs of larks and  
nightingales,

And more than teachings of the worldly-  
wise.

“Glory to God,” it said, “for, in the  
skies,

And here on earth, 'tis He alone  
prevails.”

And then I asked thee: “Shall I tell  
thee now

All that I think of, when, by land and  
sea,



## of a Violinist ❀

The days and nights illumine the world  
for me?

And how I muse on marriage, as I  
bow

In God's own places, with a throbbing  
brow?

And how, at night, I dream of kissing  
thee? "

But thou did'st answer: " First behold  
this man!

He is thy lord, for love's and lady's  
sake;

He is thy master, or I much mistake."

And I perceiv'd, hard by, a phantom  
wan

And wild and kingly, who did, walking,  
span

The open space that lay beside the  
brake.

It was Beethoven. It was he who  
came  
From monstrous shades, to journey yet  
awhile  
In pleasant nooks, and vainly seek the  
smile  
Of one lov'd woman — she to whom his  
fame  
Had been a glory had she sought the  
same,  
And lov'd a soul so grand, so free  
from guile.

It was the Kaiser of the land of song,  
The giant-singer who did storm the  
gates  
Of Heaven and Hell, a man to whom  
the Fates  
Were fierce as furies, and who suffer'd  
wrong

of a Violinist ❧

And ached and bore it, and was brave  
and strong,  
But gaunt as ocean when its rage  
abates.

I knew his tread. I knew him by his  
look  
Of pent-up sorrow — by his hair un-  
kempt  
And torn attire — and by his smile  
exempt  
From all but pleading. Yet his body  
shook  
With some great joy; and onward he  
betook  
His echoing steps the way that I had  
dreamt.

I bow'd my head. The lordly being  
pass'd.

He was my king, and I did bow to  
him.

And when I rais'd mine eyes they were  
as dim

As tears could make them. And the  
moon, aghast,

Glared in the sky; and westward came a  
blast

Which shook the earth like shouts of  
cherubim.

I held my breath. I could have fled  
the place,

As men have fled before the wrath of  
God,

But I beheld my Lady where she  
trod

The darken'd path; and I did cry apace:  
" Help me, my Lady! " and thy lustrous  
face

of a Violinist ❧

Gladden'd the air, and quicken'd all  
the sod.

Then did I hear again that voice of  
cheer.

“ Lovest thou me,” it said, “ or music  
best? ”

I seized thy hand, I drew thee to my  
breast.

“ Thee, only thee! ” I cried. “ From  
year to year,

Thee, only thee — not fame! ” And  
silver-clear,

Thy voice responded: “ God will  
grant the rest.”

I kiss'd thine eyes. I kiss'd them where  
the blue

Peep'd smiling forth; and proudly as  
before

I heard the tones that thrill'd me to  
the core.

"If thou love me," they said, "if thou  
be true,

Thou shalt have fame, and love, and  
music too!"

Entranced I kiss'd the lips that I  
adore.

LETTER NINTH

TO - MORROW

O LOVE! O Love! O Gateway of De-  
light!

Thou porch of peace, thou pageant of  
the prime

Of all God's creatures! I am here to  
climb

Thine upward steps, and daily and by  
night

To gaze beyond them, and to search  
aright

The far-off splendour of thy track  
sublime.

For, in thy precincts, on the further side,  
Beyond the turret where the bells are  
rung,

✻ Love Letters

Beyond the chapel where the rites  
are sung,  
There is a garden fit for any bride.  
O Love! by thee, by thee are sanctified  
The joys thereof to keep our spirits  
young.

By thee, dear Love! by thee, if all be  
well —

And we be wise enough to own the  
touch

Of some bright folly that has thrill'd  
us much —

By thee, till death, we may regain the  
spell

Of wizard Merlin, and in every dell  
Confront a Muse, and bow to it as  
such.

Love! Happy Love! Behold me where  
I stand



of a Violinist ❧

This side thy portal, with my strain-  
ing eyes  
Turn'd to the Future. Cloudless are  
the skies,  
And, far adown the road which thou hast  
spann'd,  
I see the groves of that elected land  
Which is the place I call my paradise.

But what is this? The plains are known  
to me;  
The hills are known, the fields, the  
little fence,  
The noisy brook as clear as innocence,  
And this old oak, the wonder of the  
lea,  
Which stops the wind to know if there  
shall be  
Sorrow for men, or pride, or recom-  
pense.

I know these things, yet hold it little  
blame

To know them not, though in their  
proud array,

The flowers advance to make the  
world so gay.

Ah, what a change! The things I know  
by name

Look unfamiliar all, and, like a flame,  
The roses burn upon the hedge to-day.

The grass is velvet. There are pearls  
thereon,

And golden signs, and braid that doth  
appear

Made for a bridal. This is fairy gear  
If I mistake not. I shall know anon.

Nature herself will teach me how to con  
The new-found words to thank the  
glowing year.

of a Violinist ❧

This is the path that led me to the  
brook;

And this the mead and this the  
mossy slope,

And this the place where breezes did  
elope

With giddy moths, enamour'd of a look;

And here I sat alone, or with a book,

Dreaming the dreams of constancy and  
hope.

I loved the river well; but not till now

Did I perceive the marvels of the  
shore.

This is a cave, and this an emerald  
floor;

And here Sir Eglantine might make a  
vow,

And here a king, a guilty king, might  
bow

Before a child, and break his word no  
more.

The day is dying. I shall see him die,  
And I shall watch the sunset, and the  
red  
Of all that splendour when the day is  
dead.  
And I shall see the stars upon the sky,  
And think them torches that are lit on  
high  
To light the Lord Apollo to his bed.

And sweet To-morrow, like a golden  
bark,  
Will call for me, and lead me on apace  
To where I shall behold, in all her  
grace,  
Mine own true Lady, whom a happy  
lark

of a Violinist ❧

Did late salute, appointing, after dark,  
A nightingale to carol in his place.

Oh, come to me! Oh, come, beloved  
day,

O sweet To-morrow! Youngest of  
the sons

Of old King Time, to whom Creation  
runs

As men to God. Oh, quickly with thy  
ray

Anoint my head, and teach me how to  
pray,

As gentle Jesus taught the little ones.

I am aweary of the waiting hours,

I am aweary of the tardy night,

The hungry moments rob me of de-  
light,

The crawling minutes steal away my  
powers;

And I am sick at heart, as one who  
    cowers,  
In lonely haunts, remov'd from human  
    sight.

How shall I think the night was meant  
    for sleep,  
When I must count the dreadful hours  
    thereof,  
And cannot beat them down, or bid  
    them doff  
Their hateful masks? A man may wake  
    and weep  
From hour to hour, and, in the silence  
    deep,  
See shadows move, and almost hear  
    them scoff.

Oh, come to me, To-morrow! like a  
    friend,

of a Violinist ❧

And not as one who bideth for the  
clock.

Be swift to come, and I will hear  
thee knock,

And though the night refuse to make an  
end

Of her dull peace, I promptly will  
descend

And let thee in, and thank thee for the  
shock.

Dear, good To-morrow! in my life, till  
now,

I did not think to need thee quite so  
soon.

I did not think that I should hate the  
moon,

Or new or old, or that my fevered  
brow

Requir'd the sun to cool it. I will bow

To this new day, that he may grant  
the boon.

Yes, 'twill consent. The day will dawn  
at last.

Day and the tide approach. They  
cannot rest.

They must approach. They must by  
every test

Of all men's knowledge, neither slow  
nor fast,

Approach and front us. When the night  
is past,

The morrow's dawn will lead me to  
my quest.

Then shall I tremble greatly, and be  
glad,

For I shall meet my true-love all  
alone,



## of a Violinist ❧

And none shall tell me of her dainty  
zone,  
And none shall say how sweetly she is  
clad;  
But I shall know it. Men may call me  
mad;  
But I shall know how bright the  
world has grown.

There is a grammar of the lips and  
eyes,  
And I have learnt it. There are  
tokens sure  
Of trust in love; and I have found  
them pure.  
Is love the guerdon then? Is love the  
prize?  
It is! It is! We find it in the skies,  
And here on earth 'tis all that will  
endure.

## ❧ Love Letters

All things for love. All things in some  
divine  
And wish'd for way, conspire, as Na-  
ture knows,  
To some great good. Where'er a  
daisy grows  
There grows a joy. The forest-trees  
combine  
To talk of peace when mortals would  
repine;  
And he is false to God who flouts the  
rose.

## LETTER TENTH

### A RETROSPECT

I WALK again beside the roaring sea,  
And once again I harken to the speech  
Of waves exulting on the madden'd  
beach.

A sound of awful joy it seems to me,  
A shuddering sound of God's eternity, —  
Telling of things beyond the sage's  
reach.

I walk alone. I see the bounding waves  
Curl'd into foam. I watch them as  
they leap  
Like wild sea-horses loosen'd from  
the deep.  
And well I know that they have seen  
the graves

Of shipwreck'd sailors; for Disaster  
paves

The fearful fields where reapers  
cannot reap.

Out there, in islands where the summer  
sun

Goes down in tempest, there are loath-  
some things

That crawl to shore, and flap un-  
sightly wings.

But here there are no monsters that can  
run

To catch the limbs of bathers; no!  
not one;

And here the wind is harmless when  
it stings.

There is a glamour all about the bay,  
As if the nymphs of Greece had tar-  
ried here.

## of a Violinist ❧

The sands are golden, and the rocks  
appear  
Crested with silver; and the breezes play  
Snatches of song they hummed when far  
away,  
And then are hush'd, as if from sudden  
fear.

They think of thee. They hunt; they  
meditate.

They will not quit the shore till they  
have seen

The very spot where thou did'st stand  
serene

In all thy beauty; and of me they  
prate,

Knowing I love thee. And, like one  
elate,

The grand old sea remembers what  
hath been.

✻ Love Letters

How many hours, how many days we  
met

Here on the beach, in that delirious  
time

When all the waves appear'd to  
break in rhyme.

Life was a joy, and love was like a  
debt

Paid and repaid in kisses — good to get,  
And good to lose — unhoarded, yet  
sublime.

We wander'd here. We saw the tide  
advance,

We saw it ebb. We saw the widow'd  
shore

Waiting for Ocean with its organ  
roar,

Knowing that, day by day, through  
happy chance,

of a Violinist ❧

She would be wooed anew, amid the  
dance

Of bridal waves, high-bounding as be-  
fore.

And I remember how, at flush of morn,  
Thou did'st depart alone, to find a  
nook

Where none could see thee; where a  
lover's look

Were profanation worse than any scorn;  
And how I went my way, among the  
corn,

To wait for thee beside the Shepherd's  
brook.

And lo! from out a cave thou did'st  
emerge,

Sweet as thyself, the flower of  
Womankind.

## ❖ Love Letters

I know 'twas thus: for, in my secret  
mind,  
I see thee now. I see thee in the surge  
Of those wild waves, well knowing that  
they urge  
Some idle wish, untalk'd-of to the  
wind.

I think the beach was thankful to have  
known  
Thy warm, white body, and the  
blessedness  
Of thy first shiver; and I well can  
guess  
How, when thy limbs were toss'd and  
overthrown,  
The sea was pleased, and every smallest  
stone,  
And every wave, was proud of thy  
caress.



## of a Violinist ❧

A maiden diving, with dishevell'd hair,  
Sheer from a rock; a syren of the deep  
Call'd into action, ere a wave could  
leap

Breast-high to daunt her; Daphne, by a  
prayer,

Lured from a forest for the sea to  
bear —

This were a dream, to fill a poet's  
sleep.

This were a thing for Phœbus to have  
eyed;

And he did eye it. Yea, the Deathless  
One

Did eye thy beauty. It was madly  
done.

He saw thee in the rising of the tide.

He saw thee well. The truth is not de-  
nied;

The shore was proud to show thee to  
the sun.

Never since Venus, at a god's decree,  
Uprose from ocean, has there lived on  
earth

A face like thine, a form of so much  
worth ;

And nowhere has the moon-obeying sea  
Known such perfection, down from  
head to knee,

And knee to foot, since that Olympian  
birth.

And, sooth, the moon was anxious to  
have placed

Her head beside thee, on the waters  
bright.

But she was foil'd ; for thou so late  
at night

of a Violinist ❧

Wouldst not go forth: no! not to be  
embraced

By Nature's Queen, though, round  
about the waist,

She would have ring'd thee with her  
softest light.

Ah me! had I a lute of sovereign  
power

I would enlarge on this, and plainly  
show

That there is nothing like thee here  
below, —

Nothing so comely, nothing in its dower  
Of youth and grace, so like a human  
flower,

And white withal, and guiltless as the  
snow.

For thou art fair as lilies, with the  
flush

That roses have while waiting for a  
kiss;  
And when thou smilest nothing comes  
amiss;  
The earth is glad to see thy dimpled  
blush.  
Had I the lute of Orpheus I would hush  
All meaner sounds to tell the stars of  
this.

I would, I swear, by Pallas' own con-  
sent,  
Inform all creatures whom the stars  
behold  
That thou art mine, and that a pen  
of gold,  
With ink of fire, though by an angel  
lent,  
Were all too poor to tell my true con-  
tent,

of a Violinist ❀

And how I love thee seven times  
seventy fold.

And sure am I that, in the ancient days,  
Achilles heard no voice so passing  
sweet,

And none so trancing, none that could  
compete

With thine for fervour; none in watery  
ways

Where Neptune dwelt, so worthy of the  
praise

Of Thetis' son, the sure and swift of  
feet.

He never met upon the plains of Troy  
Goddess or maiden so divinely  
fraught.

Not Helen's self, for whom the Tro-  
jans fought,

Was like to thee. Her love had much  
alloy,  
But thine has none. Her beauty was a  
toy,  
But thine's a gem, unsullied and un-  
bought.

And ne'er was seen by poet, in a sweven,  
An eye like thine, a face so fair to  
see  
As that which makes the sunlight  
sweet to me.  
Nor need I wait for death, or for the  
levin  
In yonder cloud, to find the path to  
Heaven.  
It fronts me here. 'Tis manifest in  
thee!

## LETTER ELEVENTH

### FAITH

Now will I sing to God a song of  
praise,

And thank the morning for the light  
it brings,

Ay! and the earth for every flower  
that springs,

And every tree that, in the jocund days,  
Thrills to the blast. My voice I will  
upraise

To thank the world for every bird  
that sings.

I will unpack my mind of all its fears.

I will advance to where the matin  
fires

Absorb the hills. My hopes and my  
desires  
Will lead me safe; and day will have  
no tears  
And night no torture, as in former  
years,  
To warp my nature when my soul  
aspires.

I will endure. I will not strive to  
peep  
Behind the barriers of the days to  
come,  
Nor, adding up the figures of a sum,  
Dispose of prayers as men dispose of  
sleep.  
I cannot count the stars, or walk the  
deep;  
But I can pray, and Faith shall not be  
dumb.



## of a Violinist ❧

I take myself and thee as mine estate —  
Thee and myself. The world is  
centred there.

If thou be well I know the skies are  
fair;

If not, they press me down with leaden  
weight,

And all is dark; and morning comes  
too late;

And all the birds are tuneless in the  
air.

I need but thee: thee only. Thou alone  
Art all my joy: a something to the  
sight

As grand as Silence, and as snowy  
white.

And do thou pardon if I make it known,  
As oft I do, with mine Amati's tone,

Amid the stillness of the starry night.

Oh, give me pity of thy heart and  
mind,

Mine own sweet Lady, if I vex thee  
now.

If the repeating of my constant vow  
Be undesired, have pity! I were blind,  
And deaf and dumb, and mad, were I  
inclined

To curb my feelings when to thee I  
bow.

Forgive the challenge of my longing  
lips

If these offend thee; and forgive me,  
too,

If I perceive, within thine eyes of  
blue,

More than I utter — more than, in  
eclipse,

## of a Violinist ❀

A man may note atween the argent  
tips

Of frightened Dian whom the Fates  
pursue.

It is the thing I dream of; 'tis the  
thing

We know as rapture, when, with  
sudden thrill,

It snares the heart and subjugates  
the will;

I mean the pride, the power, by which  
we cling

To natures nobler than the ones we  
bring,

To keep entire the fire we cannot chill.

Coyest of nymphs, my Lady! whom I  
seek

As sailors seek salvation out at sea,

## ❧ Love Letters

And poets fame, and soldiers victory,  
Behold! I note the blush upon thy cheek,  
The flag of truce that tells me thou are meek  
And soon wilt yield thy fortress up to me.

It is thy soul; it is thy soul in arms  
Which thus I conquer. All thy furtive sighs,  
And all the glances of thy wistful eyes,  
Proclaim the swift surrender of thy charms.  
I kiss thy hand; and tremors and alarms  
Discard, in parting, all their late disguise.

of a Violinist ❧

They were not foes. They knew me,  
one and all;

They knew I lov'd thee, and they  
lured me on

To try my fortune, and to wait  
thereon

For just reward. The scaling of the  
wall

Was not the meed; there came the  
festival,

And now there comes the crown that  
I must don.

O my Belovèd! I am king of thee,  
And thou my queen; and I will wear  
the crown

A little moment, for thy love's  
renown.

Yea, for a moment, it shall circle me,

❧ Love Letters

And then be thine, so thou, upon thy  
knee,  
Do seek the same, with all thy tresses  
down.

For woman still is mistress of the man,  
Though man be master. 'Tis the  
woman's right  
To choose her king, and crown him  
in her sight,  
And make him feel the pressure of the  
span  
Of her soft arms, as only woman can;  
For, with her weakness, she excels  
his might.

It is her joy indeed to be so frail  
That he must shield her; he of all the  
world

of a Violinist ❧

Whom most she loves; and then, if  
    he be hurl'd  
To depths of sorrow, she will more  
    avail  
Than half a senate. Troubles may  
    assail,  
But she will guide him by her lips  
    impearl'd.

A woman clung to Cæsar; he was  
    great,  
And great the power he gain'd by sea  
    and land.  
But when he wrong'd her, when he  
    spurn'd the hand  
Which once he knelt to, when he scoff'd  
    at Fate,  
Glory dispers'd, and left him desolate;  
For God remember'd all that first was  
    plann'd.

✻ Love Letters

The cannon's roar, the wisdom of the  
sage,

The strength of armies, and the thrall  
of kings —

All these are weak compared to  
weaker things.

Napoleon fell because, in puny rage,  
He wrong'd his house; and earth became  
a cage

For this poor eagle with his batter'd  
wings.

Believe me, Love! I honour, night and  
day,

The name of Woman. 'Tis the nobler  
sex.

Villains may shame it; sorrows may  
perplex;

But still 'tis watchful. Man may take  
away



of a Violinist ❧

All its possessions, all its worldly sway,  
And yet be worshipp'd by the soul he  
wrecks.

A word of love to Woman is as sweet  
As nectar'd rapture in a golden bowl;  
And when she quaffs the heavens  
asunder roll,  
And God looks through. And, from  
his judgment-seat,  
He blesses those who part, and those  
who meet,  
And blesses those who join the links  
of soul with soul.

And are there none untrue? God  
knows there are!  
Ay, there are those who learn in  
time the laugh

## ❖ Love Letters

That ends in madness — women who  
for chaff  
Have sold their corn — who seek no  
guiding-star,  
And find no faith to light them from  
afar;  
Of whom 'tis said: "They need no  
epitaph."

All this is known; but lo! for sake of  
One  
Who lives in glory — for my mother's  
sake,  
For thine, and hers, O Love! — I  
pity take  
On all poor women. Jesu's will be  
done!  
Honour for all, and infamy for none,  
This side the borders of the burning  
lake.

## LETTER TWELFTH

### VICTORY

Now have I reach'd the goal of my  
desire,

For thou hast sworn — as sweetly as  
a bell

Makes out its chime — the oath I love  
to tell,

The fealty-oath of which I never tire.

The lordly forest seems a giant's lyre,

And sings, and rings, the thoughts  
that o'er it swell.

The air is fill'd with voices. I have  
found

Comfort at last, enthrallment, and a  
joy

Past all belief; a peace without alloy.

There is a splendour all about the ground

As if from Eden, when the world was drown'd,

Something had come which death could not destroy.

It seems, indeed, as if to me were sent

A smile from Heaven — as if to-day the clods

Were lined with silk — the trees divining rods,

And roses gems for some high tournament.

I should not be so proud, or so content,

If I could sup, to-night, with all the gods.

## of a Violinist ❀

A shrinèd saint would change his place  
with me

If he but knew the worth of what I  
feel.

He is enrobed indeed, and for his  
weal

Hath much concern; but how forlorn is  
he!

How pale his pomp! He cannot sue to  
thee,

But I am sainted every time I kneel.

I walk'd abroad, to-day, ere yet the  
dark

Had left the hills, and down the  
' beaten road

I saunter'd forth a mile from mine  
abode.

I heard, afar, the watch-dog's sudden  
bark,

And, near at hand, the tuning of a  
lark,  
Safe in its nest, but weighted with an  
ode.

The moon was pacing up the sky  
serene,  
Pallid and pure, as if she late had  
shown  
Her outmost side, and fear'd to make  
it known;  
And, like a nun, she gazed upon the  
scene  
From bars of cloud that seemed to stand  
between,  
And pray'd and smiled, and smiled  
and pray'd alone.

The stars had fled. Not one remain'd  
behind

of a Violinist ❄

To warm or comfort; or to make  
amends

For hope delay'd, — for ecstasy that  
ends

At dawn's approach. The firmament  
was blind

Of all its eyes; and, wanton up the wind,  
There came the shuddering that the  
twilight sends.

The hills exulted at the Morning's  
birth, —

And clouds assembled, quick, as her-  
alds run

Before a king to say the fight is won.  
The rich, warm daylight fell upon the  
earth

Like wine outpour'd in madness, or in  
mirth,

To celebrate the rising of the sun.

And when the soaring lark had done his  
prayer,  
The holy thing, self-poised amid the  
blue  
Of that great sky, did seem, a space  
or two,  
To pause and think, and then did clip  
the air  
And dropped to earth to claim his guer-  
don there.  
“Thank God!” I cried, “My dear-  
est dream is true!”

I was too happy, then, to leap and dance;  
But I could ponder; I could gaze and  
gaze  
From earth to sky and back to wood-  
land ways.  
The bird had thrill'd my heart, and  
cheer'd my glance,



of a Violinist ❧

For he had found to-day his nest-  
romance,  
And lov'd a mate, and crown'd her  
with his praise.

O Love! my Love! I would not for a  
throne,

I would not for the thrones of all the  
kings

Who yet have liv'd, or for a seraph's  
wings,

Or for the nod of Jove when night hath  
flown,

Consent to rule an empire all alone.

No! I must have the grace of our two  
rings.

I must possess thee from the crowning  
curl

Down to the feet, and from the beam-  
ing eye

## ❧ Love Letters

Down to the bosom where my treasures lie.  
From blush to blush, and from the rows  
of pearl  
That light thy smile, I must possess  
thee, girl,  
And be thy lord and master till I  
die.

This, and no less: the keeper of thy  
fame,  
The proud controller of each silken  
tress,  
And each dear item of thy loveliness,  
And every oath, and every dainty name  
Known to a bride: a picture in a frame  
Of golden hair, to turn to and caress.

And though I know thee prone, in vacant  
hours,

of a Violinist ❧

To laugh and talk with those who circumvent

And make mad speeches; though I know the bent

Of some such men, and though in ladies' bowers

They brag of swords — I know my proven powers;

I know myself and thee, and am content.

I know myself; and why should I demur?

The lily, bowing to the breeze's play,  
Is not forgetful of the sun in May.

She is his nymph, and with a servitor  
She doth but jest. The sun looks down  
at her,

And knows her true, and loves her  
day by day.

E'en so I thee, O Lady of my Heart!  
O Lady white as lilies on the lea,  
And fair as foam upon the ocean free  
Whereon the sun hath sent a shining  
dart!  
E'en so I love thee, blameless as thou art,  
And with my soul's desire I compass  
thee.

For thou art Woman in the sweetest  
sense  
Of true endowment, and a bride in-  
deed  
Fit for Apollo. This is woman's  
need:  
To be a beacon when the air is dense,  
A bower of peace, a lifelong recom-  
pense —  
This is the sum of Woman's worldly  
creed.

of a Violinist ❧

And what is Man the while? And  
what his will?

And what the furtherance of his  
earthly hope?

To turn to Faith, to turn, as to a  
rope

A drowning sailor; all his blood to spill  
For One he loves, to keep her out of  
ill —

This is the will of Man, and this his  
scope.

'Tis like the tranquil sea, that knows  
anon

It can be wild, and keep away from  
home

A thousand ships — and lash itself to  
foam —

And beat the shore, and all that lies  
thereon —

## ❧ Love Letters of a Violinist

And catch the thunder ere the flash has  
gone  
Forth from the cloud that spans it  
like a dome.

This is the will of Man, and this is mine.  
But lo! I love thee more than wealth  
or fame,  
More than myself, and more than  
those who came  
With Christ's commission from the goal  
divine.  
Soul of my soul, and mine as I am thine,  
I cling to thee, my Life! as fire to  
flame.

THE END.







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